

Tourist Ship accident in the Arctic: Did ship sail too close to glacier?

Contributed by Joachim Willms [Managing Director]

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A TravelMole News:

"Questionmarks

have been raised over whether a tourist ship in the Arctic sailed too close to a glacier when large chunks of ice sheared off injuring 17 British tourists.

Fifty British tourists were on board the Aleksey Maryshev sightseeing vessel viewing ice formations when the accident occurred.

They were on a cruise booked through tour firm Discover the World off the coast of the remote Svalbard Islands around 600 miles from the North Pole.

The ship is reported to have listed violently in the sea off the islands.

Police on the islands have started investigating whether the ship, operated by Dutch company Oceanwide Expeditions, had sailed too close to the glacier, The Daily Telegraph reported.

Discover the World managing director Clive Stacey was quoted as saying: "The captain has very strict instructions on how [close] he is allowed to come to the glacier.

"We are at the moment investigating, as is the governor of Spitsbergen, exactly what happened and, if that's the case, why he was so close."

The operator, a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators which has been in operation for more than 23 years, issued a statement, saying it was awaiting a detailed report from the ship operators into the incident.

"What we do know is that the ship Aleksey Maryshev was near to an iceshelf and a part of the glacier calved off," the statement said. "We understand that some of the smaller pieces of ice and water were washed onto the ship's deck and some of our passengers were injured.

"Seven of our passengers were airlifted from the ship to Longyearbyen Hospital. None of them have life-threatening injuries although two are more seriously injured than the others - they are in a stable condition and have been moved to Tromsø Hospital in Norway. A further three passengers have also been moved to Tromsø together with

one of the crew members."

The company said that 10 further passengers were taken to hospital to be treated for minor injuries and have returned to the ship, which is docked in Longyearbyen.

The majority of passengers are due to fly home tomorrow (Saturday).

"Our absolute company priority is to concentrate on Discovery the World's clients and their families and we are doing everything possible to assist them," the statement said.

by Phil Davies"